

and would often drive me and another boy as a pair with string reins. He was always full of fun; and at Midsummer, when he went home for the holidays in the basket of the Blackheath coach, fired away at the passers-by with his pea-shooter.¹

• Another and less friendly account, which appears to

be based on the recollections of his Jewish schoolfellow, I describes Disraeli as

a lazy boy who excelled in none of the school exercises. However, he would amuse his companions on a wet half-holiday with a little extemporised drama. Being able to draw he would also construct a castle in paper as the scene of the adventures which he described. He had a taste not uncommon among schoolboys for little acts of bargaining and merchandise. . . . Mr. Potticany forbade newspapers, but a clique, of which the two Jew boys were members, were allowed to take in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*. So far as politics, the talk of the embryo Premier was pronounced Toryish.

According to this writer the youthful Benjamin was not only dramatist but actor ; in a school performance of ' The Merchant of Venice ' he took the part of Gratiano, but failed to win applause.²

Meagre indeed, in other respects, is our knowledge of those schooldays at Blackheath, though they extended into a good many years. In both the reminiscences that have been cited we find touches that remind us of Disraeli's own pictures of the boyhood of his heroes in *Vivian Q-rey* and *Oontarini Fleming*; and these two novels in their turn, which have an autobiographic significance above that of all the others, may help us to imagine what manner of boy their author must have been. Like both his heroes we may surmise that he was daring and im-

• petuous, sometimes perhaps mutinous
and pugnacious ;

¹ Rev. E. Jones in the *Standard* of April 28, 1887. Mr. Jones
• was only six months younger than his protector, who
had no doubt,
however, both, physically and mentally, the
precocious development
of his race.

² *Jewish Chronicle*, May 29, 1868. Published
soon after Disraeli
had become Prime Minister for the first time, these
recollections are open
to the suspicion of having taken a colour from the
political animus of
later years.